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ABSTRACT

The California Library Association has established a mentoring program to assist new or reentering librarians in establishing themselves in the profession. At the end of 3 years, the Mentor/Protege program had over 50 participating pairs of experienced and novice librarians. The program is described, and suggestions are given for implementing a similar program. A brochure and profile form introduce the program and explain the roles of mentor and protege. The profile helps the association match pairs. Guidelines for both mentors and proteges help them make the most of the relationship. Feedback and evaluation are important components that ensure benefits for both participants and program improvement. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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MENTORING--
THE CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCE

A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE MARCH 18-21, 1992
ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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MENTORING--THE CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCE

The first step in establishing a Mentoring Program is to determine what one means by "mentoring", and ask oneself questions such as, why such a program is wanted, what one expects by way of results, and then decide on how one wants to go about it.

There are many different ideas about what mentoring is and what mentoring does. In the popular comic strip "Doonesbury" (1984) Gary Trudeau has an influential person say about the word "mentor," "I didn't even know it was a verb."

The two basic schools of thought about mentoring are (1) the belief that mentoring can be structured or facilitated, and (2) the belief that it can only happen by some mysterious and magical alchemy. Representatives of the second school of thought, who maintain that true mentoring is spontaneous or informal, caution that it cannot be structured or formalized. In their opinion a structured mentoring relationship lacks a critical, magical ingredient. They see it as an arranged marriage--utilitarian but usually lacking passion. K. Fury on page 47 of her article "Mentor Mania" (Savvy, April 1980) writes that the mentor/protege relationship is a "mysterious, chemical attraction of two people . . . prompting them to take the risks inherent in any intensely close relationship."

The California Library Association Mentor/Protege Program (C.L.A.M.P.P.) determined to steer a middle course between excessive structure and passionate pairing. We emphasize the importance of maintaining the magic of the pairing while avoiding the stifling effect of excessive structure. We see our program as a facilitated program. We facilitate the beneficial results for mentor, protege, libraries, and ultimately the profession. We engage in facilitated mentoring, in which we establish a structure and series of processes designed to create effective mentoring relationships, guide the desired behavior changes of those involved, and evaluate the results for the proteges, the mentors, and the California Library Association. The definition of mentoring which best describes the idea of mentoring which is facilitated by CLAMPP is: "a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies." (Murray, 1991.)

Our program began three and a half years ago when the Professional Standards Committee of the California Society of Librarians, a constituent group of the California Library Association, initiated a Mentoring Program to assist proteges (i.e., new or re-entry librarians or librarians new

to California) in establishing themselves in the profession. This Mentor/Protege Program was initiated on the premise that the Mentorship Program would benefit the profession, libraries, and individuals, that it would hasten career development, promote networking, and link generations of library leaders. It was assumed that librarians who are encouraged to participate in professional activities and who seek guidance from an established librarian would find their careers and contacts expanding.

At the end of three years of operation, the Mentor/Protege Program had over 50 pairs participating. Judging from the evaluation forms which were completed at regular intervals for each pair, most pairs considered the Program very worth while. The time devoted to the Program varied greatly among those participating, but the vast majority agreed that the amount of time spent was well rewarded. Almost all felt that they had grown professionally, and many formed rewarding friendships as well.

To get our program underway, we developed a brochure and a profile form. The brochure reads:

> YOU ARE INVITED TO BE A MENTOR OR PROTEGE FOR ONE YEAR. The California Library Association is sponsoring a mentor support program for newly graduated librarians, librarians new to California, and re-entry professionals.
>
> MENTORS: Central to this program is the development of a colleague. You'll receive the satisfaction of helping; additionally, the process of mentoring may assist you in re-evaluating your professional beliefs, theories, and practices. By participating in the program, you are contributing to the profession as a whole.
>
> PROTEGES: Key to this program is your development as a professional. You'll have a chance to discuss issues, meet other professionals, and develop a beneficial relationship with your mentor.
>
> YOUR ROLE AS PROTEGE:
>
> - Explore professional concerns
> - Meet professionals who share your career interests
> - Receive guidance in professional development
> - Discuss identification of job opportunities
> - Establish networking relationships

YOUR ROLE AS MENTOR;

Explain how organizations really work

Discuss professional goal setting

Review job search techniques

Talk about the things you <u>didn't</u> learn in library school

Examine current issues in professional ethics

Discuss career advancement

Describe CLA structure and purpose and how to get involved

Introduce local professional networks and California library systems

Provide information regarding professional concerns

HOW TO GET INVOLVED. . .

Commit to a one year planned and evaluated program

Hold MLS or equivalent

Complete CLA Mentor/Protege Profile Form (inserted in this brochure; additional copies available from CLA Headquarters)

Or write for more information to:

CLA Mentor/Protege Program
717 K Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 447 8541

The MENTOR/PROTEGE Program is sponsored by the Professional Standards Committee of the California Society of Librarians, California Library Association.

(Disclaimer) In some programs, mentors intervene on behalf of their proteges. These activities are not part of this program.

On the Profile Form are such questions as:

I want to be a (check one): Mentor Protege

Mentor Only: Current job position:

Protege Only:... New librarian Re-entry librarian
New to state

Name:
Preferred Mailing Address
Preferred Phone Number: Day Evening
Business Address if Different....

Library experience:

Type of library preferred for your Mentor or Protege (check all of interest:
Public_____ Academic_____ School_____ Special(specify)_____

Preferred sex of Mentor or Protege: Female___ Male___ No preference___

Other characteristics desired in your Mentor or Protege, e.g., bilingual:

Your library organization memberships and community activities:

Additional information or comments that may be useful in pairing Mentor and Proteges:

Mentors and Proteges will be matched on interests and geographic area. Do you prefer a Mentor/Protege:
Near Work_____ Near Home_____ No Preference_____

Are you a CLA member?_____Member_____No

Please return the completed form to : CLA Mentor/Protege Program, 717 K Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814

We are contemplating adding to the form: If a Mentor, will you accept a protege who is job seeking?

Once these profiles are completed, they are sent to the CLA office in Sacramento, and then routed to the appropriate Co-Chair. Upon receipt of a profile, the Chair sends the mentor or protege a "pending letter" telling him or her that we have received his or her application and will make a match in the near future. The Professional Standards Committee, South, meets quarterly to match pairs. Once a match has been made, we contact the Mentor to see if he or she will take on the proposed protege. If the Mentor agrees, we send to the Mentor a "Match Letter," a copy of

the Protege's profile and a set of "Guidelines for the Mentor." We send the Protege a "Match Letter," a copy of the Mentor's profile and a set of "Guidelines for the Protege." The Mentor is expected to make the initial contact.

GUIDELINES FOR THE MENTOR

These guidelines are intended to serve as suggestions and reassurances as your mentor/protege relationship progresses. It is hoped that the combination of these guidelines with realistic and flexible expectations and personal preferences in planning meeting places, times and topics for discussion can assist you and your protege in developing a valuable mentoring partnership. Both participants should keep in mind realistic expectations for the initial year of mentoring while working together to build a mentoring partnership.

Defining Your Role

--Showing your willingness to share your accumulated knowledge and experience will help establish the relationship.

--You might give consideration beforehand to the parameters of the relationship. Do not assume that you must serve as an advocate or as a major link in a career network; instead you might want to emphasize the importance of contacts with colleagues that the protege should cultivate.

--You can expect a variety of topics and questions to be posed by your protege. You can choose to respond more generally on strategies and options for the work environment, instead of responding to those questions and problems that would be more appropriately addressed by your protege's supervisor.

Preparation Tips

--Phone calls and notes are always beneficial to maintain contact, minimally monthly during the first year. This will emphasize your availability.

--It is useful to meet with a list of questions to ask about the protege's background and interests and to be an active listener.

--Allow yourself the opportunity to reappraise your day-to-day activities and your own goals. This will facilitate discussions with your protege on your daily experiences and other professional concerns.

[] WHAT YOUR WORK IS LIKE--Describe your job generally by including: major tasks, subtasks and specific responsibilities. Comment on special skills and knowledge (e.g., online searching and subject specialties).

[] WHAT ARE YOUR WORKING CONDITIONS--Cover your working hours per day and per week along with salary range and typical fringe benefits.

[] HOW YOU MIGHT SPEND A TYPICAL DAY--Identify the functions of your job and how they fit into the total organization. Include points on how your day is arranged.

[] WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES NEEDED FOR YOUR WORK--Plan to mention your work environment with the types of patrons and situations encountered. Explain the personal qualities that you feel are necessary for what you encounter in your job.

[] WHAT MIGHT THE FUTURE HOLD--When discussing your career, you might include your preparation for advancement opportunities. Identify preparation steps for a changing profession (e.g. technology). Explain economic conditions such as funding sources and governing bodies that will have an impact on the future.

[] HOW DID YOU BEGIN YOUR CAREER--A discussion of your background might include how you got started in your career and job entry tactics.

[] HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR CAREER--As you begin to coach your protege you might want to consider 1) what you like most and least about your job; 2) what you would change if you could; 3) interpersonal skills you find most important in your work and why; 4) attitudes and values that are important to you and how they are reflected in your work; 5) obstacles or barriers you had to overcome; 6) why you chose this type of work.

[] HOW YOUR CAREER AFFECTS YOUR LIFE--Your protege may be interested in other aspects of your career and how your career impacts on family time, leisure time, general health, exercise, stress factors (e.g. tension, fatigue, burn-out).

Goals to Keep in Mind

--You will want to plan discussions which will introduce the protege to the profession in general while attempting to convey the underlying values which motivate the profession.

--With the development of the protege as the goal, you might join the protege in assessing his or her strengths and weaknesses while identifying areas for improvement.

Building the Relationship

[] YOUR ROLE AS COUNSELOR--You can serve as a key influence on the protege's transition from holding ajob to developing a library career. Try to contribute to the protege's sense of growing confidence and self-worth by offering positive reinforcement. Plan to give constructive criticism on skills or outlooks that could be improved. Encourage the protege to learn from stressful situations rather than become discouraged.

[] YOUR ROLE AS EDUCATOR--Consider long-term and short-term assistance that you might provide such as alerting your protege to workshops and seminars suited to his or her career development. Allow time for you to listen as well as to give information.

[] YOUR ROLE AS LIAISON--You will want to help your protege realize the value of secondary contacts in the profession. You can aid tremendously in identifying groups which the protege should be aware of and may want to join.

--Keep in mind those individuals who gave you support or encouragement in your early career. The success of the relationship will be based more on a genuine interest than burdensome time commitments.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTEGE

These guidelines are provided to serve as suggestions for developing the mentor/protege relationship; you are encouraged to incorporate your own ideas and personal preferences. The guidelines may provide help in identifying potential benefits for participants, deciding on useful discussion topics and forming realistic expectations for the initial year.

Defining Your Role

--A positive interest in your own career and the work of the mentor is a basic requisite. Keep in mind that you are seeking career direction and guidance; be receptive to positive criticism and advice from your mentor.

--Keeping realistic expectations regarding the relationship is important; your progress and acomplishments will be centered on your own initiative. This will help you move forward independently when the time comes.

Preparation Tips

--It is the responsibility of both parties to maintain the contact for the initial one-year period. Phone calls and notes are always encouraged between meetings.

--You may want to mentally assess your career competencies and objectives. An option would be to write a short and long range career development plan to share with your mentor.

--Realizing that the realities of the actual job differ from the ideal perception of the job, think of questions that will clarify things in your mind about the nature of the job.

--You should plan to bring up general or specific points regarding the fields of librarianship and possible career directions. Give the mentor the opportunity to respond more fully at a later time.

Building the Relationship

[ ] YOUR MENTOR AS COUNSELOR--Feel free to express uncertainties about issues or aspects of the work with which either you or your mentor are involved. Your mentor should also serve as a sounding board for your new ideas or opinions. Your mentor may also be able to suggest coping strategies if you experience difficulties or uncertainties in your job.

[ ] YOUR MENTOR AS EDUCATOR--One area you might want to focus on would be the rapid changes within the fields of librarianship. Your mentor can give you a more experienced vantage point and suggest strategies for keeping up with progress.

[ ] YOUR MENTOR AS LIAISON--The mentor can facilitate the expansion of your colleague network, so don't hesitate to ask about others who could serve as resource individuals.

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In addition to sending out Guidelines to Mentors and Proteges, there are two workshops held each year, one in northern California and one in Southern California. One is held in the spring and one in the fall. If the CLA Annual Conference is in Northern California (it is always in November), then the spring workshop will be in Southern California. In these workshops (which are open to those who are actually paired and to all who are interested) we go over the Guidelines, explain the evaluation procedures and

other routine matters. In particular, we try to cover the following points:

Explain how mentors fit into the larger career development picture

Share critical mentoring skills and the value of flexibllity

Give tips for writing short-range or long-range career plans for the proteges

Describe ways to include the protege in the environment of the mentor (e.g., attending management meetings with time provided for "debriefing" afterwards)

Suggest alternative responses to questions best handled by immediate supervisors

Stress that the act of reaching out to a protege with coaching and advice is as valuable as concrete career guidance

Counter unrealistic expectations by offering potential benefits and manageable committments

Give tips on negotiating a workable agreement in terms of communication and meetings

Outline coaching and listening skills that encourage feedback

Address motivational needs and the benefits of enhanced self-esteem, fulfillment and revitalized professional interest

Provide examples of mentoring activities

Provide ideas to improve communications skills and prepare for cross-cultural relationships

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FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

A month after the mentor and protege have been paired, an evaluation card (hold up pink card) is sent out asking them to respond to the following questions and also giving them a member of the Committee to contact if any questions or problems arise.

The pink card reads:

PLESE RETURN THIS CONVENIENT MAILER BY REVERSING THE FOLD AND SEALING BEFORE RETURNING TO THE CLA OFFICE.

The CLA Mentoring Program wants feedback on how the program is working for you. Please answer the following questions:

How many times have you met?_____
First meeting date:_____

Last meeting date:_____

Do you feel you have a good match?
_____Yes. Great! Contact us if you have any comments.

_____Could be better - because of distance_____

- or work interests_____

- _____ other, please specify_____

Call or write your contact person for ideas to make things better.

_____No. Your contact person is available to help, please call or write.

DO YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM?

_____
_____

On the reverse side is the name, address and phone number of contact person.

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After three months, six months, and nine months, Telephone Contact Evaluation Forms are filled out.

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After a year we send a final evaluation letter which reads:

Dear Mentor/Protege

Now that you have participated in the CLA Mentoring Program for at least nine months, you are requested to complete this evaluation form and return it to the CLA office by_____. Your mentoring partnership was regarded as a 12-month commitment, which could likely evolve into a long term professional contact. As coordinators for the CLAMP, the members of the CSL Professional Standards

Committee, are anxious to gather your impressions and views of your mentoring experience.

Your responses and comments will provide valuable information for future coordinators. This is not to serve as a final assessment of your mentoring experience. The intent is to gather descriptive information on the scope and general characteristics of the mentoring process. Within the framework of the CLA Mentoring Program, there are some anticipated outcomes that are not readily measured, yet will provide a lasting impact on the profession. Hopefully the proteges have gained knowledge in their field, developed a professional viewpoint and received encouragement to fact challenges. It is likely that the mentors have gained insight and information that enhanced their interaction with others in their professional circle.

The Professional Standards Committee values your responses and commends you for the contributions you have made through your participation in the CLA Mentoring Program.

Please check one _____Mentor _____Protege

Please mark the following areas in which you gave or received help:

_____ 1) advice on career goals
_____ 2) encouragement to face challenges
_____ 3) new knowledge about your field
_____ 4) new skills to apply to the work setting
_____ 5) additional contacts or resource persons
_____ 6) joining additional professional groups or committees outside your job

Please comment on these or any additional areas of exchange that were beneficial to your mentoring experience:

_____
_____
_____

Please mark the categories that cover some of your discussion topics:

_____ 1) professional issues
_____ 2) technological concerns
_____ 3) organizational dynamics
_____ 4) career development
_____ 5) career interests

Please comment on any other significant topics that were shared:

_____
_____
_____

Did you do any of the following activities as preparation (Circle one):

1) Did you read anything from the bibliography? yes no
2) Did you read any resources in addition to the printed information provided by CLA? yes no
3) Did your protege prepare a short-range and a long-range career plan? yes no
4) Did you arrange visits and tours of your work environmetn? yes no

Comment on your preparation:_____
_____
_____

Please mark the following points which proved to be difficulties:

_____ 1) matching of work interests
_____ 2) distance
_____ 3) time scheduling
_____ 4) sensitive questions best handled by the immediate supervisor
_____ 5) Any others? Please comment:_____
_____
_____

	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
The mentoring partership was a valuable experience			
The time commitment was manageable			
A schedule of topics was helpful			
More guidance from printed sources is warranted			

Please respond to the following questions by number on the back of these sheets. You may use additional sheets if needed.

1. What other information would you have appreciated receiving?

2. Did you sense that this program contributed to your professionalism?

3. Please describe your degree of satisfaction with the mentoring experience including any aspects that were disappointing or problematic.

4. Can you offer any "great ideas" that have worked for your mentoring partnership?

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